

Chapter Twelve

BENGALI LITERATURE IN POST-TAGORE PERIOD

Introduction

There is no end of controversy regarding the artistic achievement of contemporary Bengali literature, because the critics can never be unanimous about contemporary literature. So modern readers may have reasonable misgivings about the chronology and order of contemporary writers as well as about the form of literature and its social accountability. The 'young turks' are always impetuous and worshippers of novelty. It is in the nature of the young people to consider their own age as 'progressive', because they are brought up in it, and condemn their immediate predecessors as decadent, conservative or reactionary. They cannot make an objective evaluation of their literary predecessors. The old writers who are still alive continue to stick to their own literary ideals, and they refuse to go beyond Rabindranath. **Rabindranath is their outer limit. They fail to recognise the development of Bengali literature after the death of Tagore. Many post-Tagore writers have moved away from Rabindranath.** And when they try to tread on a new track, they, by implication only, ensure the greatness of Rabindranath. The creative urge can never be satisfied by blind imitation or even by intelligent following. Genuine creative talent must forge out new art-forms and move in new directions. The present state of Bengali literature only reaffirms this axiomatic truth. The modern writers are fully aware of the lofty heights scaled by Rabindranath

and so they try to outgrow the influence of Rabindranath and break new grounds.

When exactly did modernism begin? Hopkins, the Victorian poet was the first man to introduce modern sensibility and imagery in English poetry by bringing about many technical innovations. After his death in 1889 people quickly forgot him. But, in 1918, when Robert Bridges brought out a collection of poems by Hopkins (*The Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*), the British readers realised that this Victorian poet had paved the way for modern English poetry. Again, after the First World War there was a sea-change in the philosophy of life, and sense of values and culture. Literature was also inevitably affected by this change of outlook. That is why the literature of the post-war period is known as modern literature. It was around this time that the Imagist Group was formed in England under the leadership of T. E. Hulme and Amy Lowell. The book entitled *Some Imagist Poets*, published in 1915, contained some of these new kinds of poems. In England the post-war literature is known as modern literature. In Bengal, generally speaking, the modern period comprises the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, because the literature prior to this period is known as mediaeval literature.

That is why we should like to call the literature of the present time as 'contemporary literature', although the expression 'contemporary literature' is rather vague and not strictly specified. However, in the context of our present discussion contemporary literature would mean Bengali literature produced after the Second World War.

Rabindranath died in 1941. Sometime before that, around 1930, there was a global depression resulting in acute unemployment which completely disturbed the normal life and thought. Bengali youths were not very much impressed by non-cooperation movement organised by Mahatma Gandhi. Meanwhile, India was involved in the politics of the second world war. The holocaust of war disturbed the mental peace of the Bengalis and the old, time-honoured, traditional values began to disintegrate. The

spontaneous movement of 1942, the sight of Japanese planes on the horizon and the news of frequent infiltrations of the Japanese army in the eastern border completely broke the heart of all and sundry. And, above all, the famine, deliberately created by the British, communal riots and the acceptance of the two-nation theory that culminated in the partition of the country, the influx of refugees into West Bengal, and the consequent moral degeneration of the Bengali race, the exploitation of industrialists, the recurrent resistance movements of labourers, strikes and lock-outs, filled out the lugubrious lot of the land. On the other hand, there was the mounting affluence of the new-rich. Again, poverty-stricken, cheerless, miserable life of the lower stratum of the society, rampant political corruption, the broken youth, and the control of politics by selfish businessmen, became part and parcel of modern existence. All these factors were largely responsible for the complete disintegration of values in the post-War Bengal. Furthermore, when other states have closed their doors on the Bengalis, collapsing economic fabric of Bengal has failed to offer jobs and opportunities to youths. All these social, familial and psychological disruptions have made the middle class Bengalis completely desperate about their future. For the present Bengali youth the past does not exist, the present is full of tensions and anxieties and the future is absolutely uncertain, if not completely bleak. The spectre of the society has inevitably cast its gloom on Bengali literature. Throughout the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century it was the middle class Bengalis who nurtured the Bengali literature. But, after the Second World War, this class became fragmented on account of various social, political and economic disasters. Here we shall make an attempt to understand the sensibility of the contemporary Bengali literature through a brief discussions of the literature of our time.

New Trends in Poetry

We have already seen that from the second decade of the twentieth century new notes were heard in Bengali poetry influenced by Rabindranath. Mohitlal, Nazrul and Jatindranath

were the first to strike new notes. But they could not completely escape the influence of Rabindranath. Novelties were confined to Mohitlal's bold sensuousness and anti-spiritual approach to life, Nazrul's revolutionary ardour and bursting vitality reflected in ideas and language and Jatindranath's languid scepticism about the world and life. In spite of newness in certain directions they did not try to produce any new aesthetics or poetic ideal. But gradually a rising note of revolt against Rabindranath became increasingly audible.

The *Sabujpatra* (1913) under the leadership of Pramatha Chowdhury broke away from the old tradition and tried to establish rationalism and modern sensibility in literature. But this periodical effected liberation mainly in the fields of essays and articles. Rabindranath himself brought in modernism during his *Balākā* and *Punāsca* period. A faint effort to reject Rabindranath in favour of new poetic ideal was evidenced in the *Kallol* (1923) of Calcutta and the *Pragati* (1927) of Dacca. The *Kallol*, confined to a very limited literary group, tried to realise its ideals within it. Some of the members of the group that came into existence in connection with the *Bhāratī*, under the leadership of Manilal Gangopadhyay joined the *Kallol* and tried with their contributions to make the periodical the principal organ of modern literature. The *Kallol* was published under the editorship of Gokulchandra Nag and Dineshranjan Das. After the death of Gokulchandra, Premendra Mitra acted as a joint-editor of this journal for some-time. The *Kallol* survived till 1930. Many of the writers who became eminent afterwards (Achintya, Buddhadev, Premendra, Tarasankar, Nazrul, Mohitlal, Jibanananda, Jatindranath, 'Yubanāśva' or Manish Ghatak, Sailajananda *et al*) made their maiden appearance in the *Kallol*. The faint beginning of modern Bengali poetry can be noticed in this literary magazine. Then one can mention the *Kālī-kalam* (1926), edited by Sailajananda Mukhopadhyay and the *Pragati* (1927). *Pragati* under the joint editorship of Buddhadev Basu and Ajit Dutta made many experiments with the form and technique of modern Bengali poetry. Around 1930 the new voices became

increasingly stronger and louder. *Bandir Bandanā* (Hymn of a hymnsayer) by Buddhadev Basu and *Kusumer Mās* (The month of flowers) by Ajit Dutta were published in 1930 within a period of a few months. *Prathamā* (The first one) by Premendra Mitra was published in bookform in 1932; but the poems collected in this volume were composed between 1924 and 1928. *Tanvī* (Young lady) by Sudhindranath Dutta was also published in 1930, although his originality was manifest only in 1935 in *Orchestra*. Bishnu De's first collection of poems entitled *Urvaśī O Artemis* was published in 1932. *Jharā Pālak* (Moulted feather), the first collection of poems by Jibanananda Das was published in 1927, but we do not meet the real Jibanananda in this volume. It is largely an echo of Mohitlal and Nazrul. We meet the original Jibanananda in *Dhūsar Pāṇḍulipi* (Grey manuscript) in 1936. Although he started writing from 1927 he did not come into his real self before 1936. Amiya Chakrabarty and Samar Sen appeared in the poetical arena still later. So it is evident that we do not find modern Bengali poetry worth its name before 1930.

In Bengal, modern poetry originated from a revolt against Rabindranath and after imbibing the influence of the post-War English poetry. Most of the modern Bengali writers were admirers of modern English poetry and some of them were teachers of English and fully conversant with the changes that were coming over European poetry and they tried to introduce the latest diction in Bengali poetry.

Modern English poetry had its real beginning just before or around the first World War. Between 1912 and 1917 T. E. Hulme formed the Imagist Group. Amy Lowell, an American woman poet and Ezra Pound, another American poet, started propagating through this group, for a new type of poetry. According to them romanticism must be replaced by absolute objectivity concerned only with the poet's response to a visual object or scene. Pound was the first to use the Imagist method in poetry. The imagists were amply influenced by the French poet Baudelaire and the Japanese lyric form *haiku* or *hokku*. Lowell, Pound and Eliot—

three American poets—brought about a new epoch in poetry. Of course, Hopkins had much earlier suggested modern poetry through his technical innovations towards the end of the nineteenth century. The Imagist Group soon broke up but modern English poetry discovered its identity by 1930. Thomas Stearns Eliot, an American citizen, who came to London in 1915, effected revolution in poetry long before he became a British citizen in 1927. In *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917), *Ara Vos Prec* (1919), *Poems* (1920), *The Waste Land* (1922) etc. he constructed a new poetic theory regarding form and technique of poetry. Although Ezra Pound started writing poetry in 1909 he became an established poet only around 1918, and in 1920 he started writing the famous *Cantos*. W. H. Auden appeared much later. His first collection of poems entitled *Poems* was published in 1930. Stephen Spender's maiden publication, *Twenty Poems* also came out in the same year. The Collected Poems of Cecil De Lewis was published in 1935, although the poems were composed during the period between 1929 and 1933. In view of the above facts we are driven to the conclusion that modern Bengali poetry at its very inception was directly influenced by modern English poetry.

Thirty years that cover the period from 1930 to 1960 constitute the period of modern Bengali poetry's search for identity. It is after a series of obstacles, struggles and eccentricities that modern poetry ultimately emerged as a significant body of poetry. Buddhadev Basu, Premendra Mitra, Ajit Dutta and Achintya Sengupta strongly felt the urge to do something new in Bengali poetry. The *Kallol* in Calcutta and the *Pragati* in Dacca were pioneers in experimenting with modern ideas. In spite of the virulent attacks from the *Sanibārer Cithi* (converted into a monthly in 1927) modern Bengali poetry continued to grow. The first phase of modern Bengali poetry was nurtured and developed by the four poets mentioned above. Of them Achintyakumar later shifted to fiction. The other three (Buddhadev, Premendra and Ajit Dutta) effected a new awareness about poetry but it is difficult to believe that they brought about any serious revolution.

Ajit Dutta is a born romantic. Right from the age of the *Pragati* down to modern times he has been mainly concerned with love, beauty and pure romance. His *Kusumer Mās* (The month of flowers, 1930), *Pātālkanyā* (A girl of the nether world, 1938), *Naṣṭacāṇḍ* (A defiled moon, 1945), *Punarnabā* (Ever new, 1947) and *Chāyār Ālpanā* (Embroidery of shadow, 1953), show that in spite of his avowed rejection of Rabindranath he has not been able to escape the influence of Tagore in any respect. His romance centers round the earthly lady, 'Mālati' and weaves a pattern of realistic dream and golden romance. Some of his sonnets are sure to attain permanence. Poetry in his hands is never reduced to just a vehicle of various theories and philosophical speculations. His poetry, therefore, is very pleasant. His romantic reveries are superbly expressed in measured diction. Let us cite one example :

*mālatir chāyā-cokhe dhīre dhīre nibe āse ālo,
caitra-pūrṇimār cāḍ tathāpi madir madālas,
mālatir ākhi hote punja punja kusum milālo,
mrityur mohan sparśe tanu tār śithil abaś.
jyotsnā-śikta haimākāśe nibe āse caitra-madhuras,
tathāpi e ājikār madhurātri nā haite śeṣ
adhare labhite habe bimugdher adharparaś,
rūpasī mālati tāi dhariyāche aparūp beś,
aparūp mālati se—adhare cumban yār, bakṣe
yār ananta āśleṣ.*

Light fades slowly in the darkening eyes of Malati.
The full moon of Caitra still drowsily benumbed,
Piles of flowers wither in the eyes of Malati.
Her mortal frame becoming lax and insensate
with the loving touch of death.
The vernal intoxication is fast running out of the
moon-blanchd golden sky
But I must drink deep the nectar of her lips
before this enchanted night slips out.

My beautiful Malati has assumed a charming form
 A charming Malati—a matchless beauty
 With kiss on her lips and an unending embrace.

The magic web that he weaves by an admixture of romance and fairy tale is rare in contemporary poetry :

*gabhīr samudratale prabāldvipar sīmā chādī',
 timirā yekhāne thāke tāro niche sāper dālān,
 sāt-diṅgā madhukar ye dūr sāgare dey pādi,
 yekhāne samudratale marakat mānikar thām.
 tāro dūre, tāro dher nice,
 lakṣa phaṇā niḥśvāse duliche,
 ekelā sonār kanyā sei deśe aghore ghumāy,
 jhilmil phaṇār chāyāy.*

At the bottom of the unfathomable ocean,
 Beyond the limits of the coral islands
 And lower than the habitations of the whales
 Stands the palace of snakes.
 Beyond the sunset point voyaged by the
 legendary fleet of seven vessels
 Lies, in the depth of the ocean,
 the emerald tower.
 Still further and deeper down
 The golden girl sleeps alone in deep slumber
 Guarded by thousand snakes with sparkling hoods.

Buddhadev Basu (1908-1974) was first to oppose the poetic ideals of Rabindranath strongly and consciously, and set upon himself the task of bringing about a radical change in form and technique of poetry. His first collection of poems *Marmabānī* (1925) is out of print. But his *Bandīr Bandanā* (1930), *Prthibīr Prati* (To the earth, 1933), *Kaṅkābatī* (1937), *Damayantī* (1943), *Draupadīr Śādi* (Robe of Draupadi, 1948), *Śiter Prārthanā*: *Basanter Uttar* (Prayer of winter: Reply of spring, 1955) are

quite well-known. Although he sharply criticized Rabindranath, his actual poetic realm consists of nothing but romance, love and beauty. Occasionally there are yearnings for a greater life. He also raised his voice against parochialism prevalent in the society. But his impatience to accept the bond of the earthly love, infinite passions of a finite heart and romantic exuberance have stood in the way of his powerful expression. He believed, like the Imagist Group of England, that he was the guardian of modern Bengali poetry. As a result of this self-styled guardianship the natural flow of his expression is often thwarted. It is a clog on his poetic movements that he had deeply imbibed the influence of Rabindranath and tried throughout his life to disown it. It is only towards the end of his life that he got over the obsession of becoming the father of a 'school' and it is only then that his rich creativity is liberated through soft and tranquil expressions of romantic beauty. Buddhadev did not break any new ground in form and technique of poetry, although his conscious efforts in this direction cannot be gainsaid. He was so much fascinated by the descriptions of sensual passions and lust for life depicted in the poetry of Baudelaire and the writings of D. H. Lawrence that he had practically no time to seriously experiment with poetry. In his later career Buddhadev Basu became slightly conscious of his weaknesses and tried to use new kind of diction and symbols in his poetry. Some of his poems of latter days express his conviction in the languor of life. In this connection it may be mentioned that under the editorship of Basu the quarterly *Kavitā* became the powerful vehicle of experimentation of young and budding poets during the forties. Here are a few lines from one of his familiar poems of the early period.

prabṛttir abicchedya kārāgāre cirantan bandī kari'
rekhecho āmāy—
nirmam nirmātā mama ! e kebal akāraṇ ānanda tomār.
mane kari mukta habo, mane kari, rahite dibo nā
mor tare e nikhile bandhaner cinha mātra tār.

*rukṣa dasyubeśe tāi hāsyamukhe bhese yāi ucchvasita
 svecchācār-srote,
 upekṣiyā cale yāi saṁsār-samāj-gaḍā lakṣa lakṣa
 kṣudra kaṇṭaker
 niṣṭhur āghāt, dāstver sneher santān
 saṅkocer buke hāni tibra tikṣṇa rūḍha parihās,
 abajñār kaṭhor bhartsanā.*

You have made me a permanent prisoner of my own
 inextricable carnal desires, oh, my pitiless Creator.

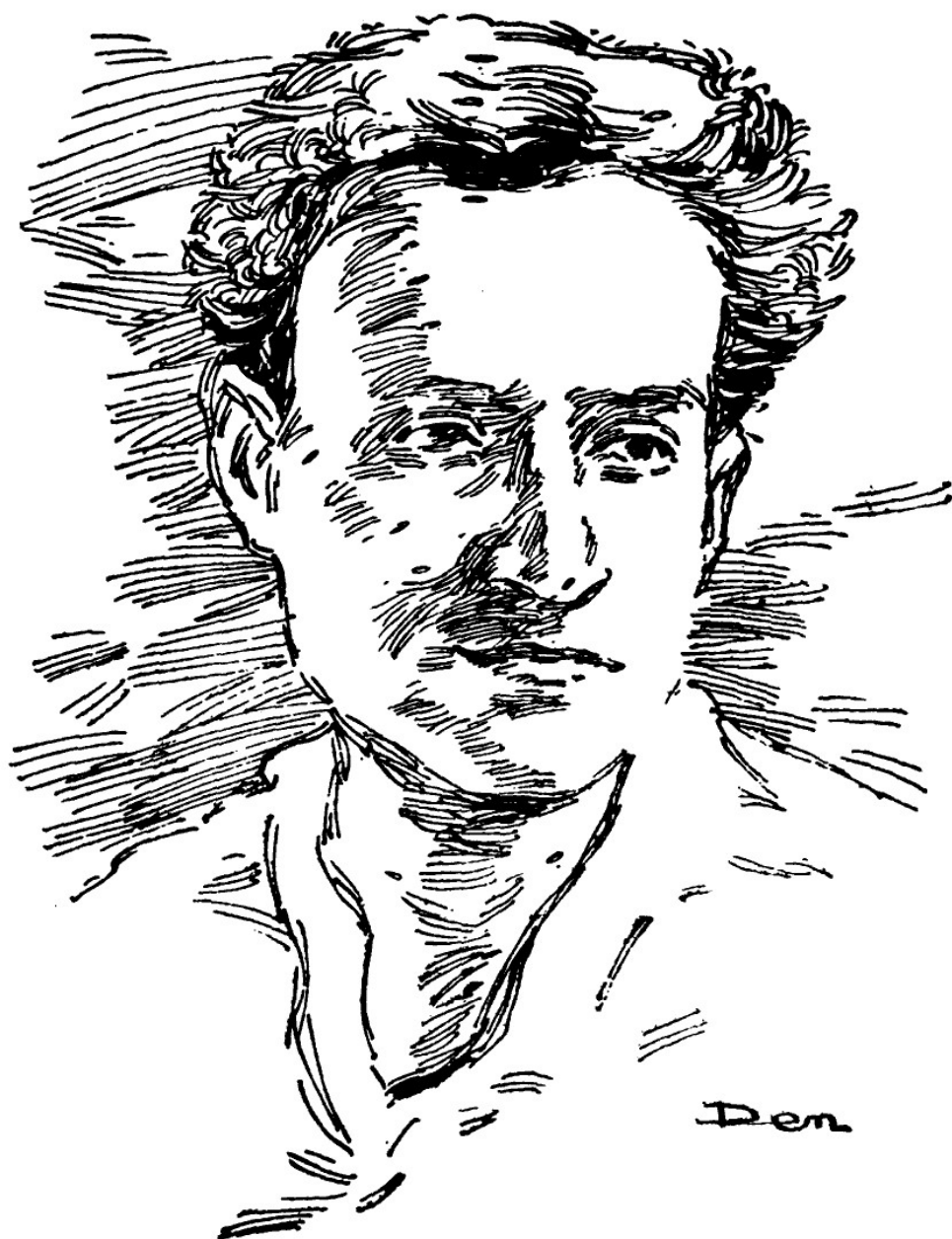
Such is your pleasure:

I plan to be free ; I decide to sever all connections
 and throw away all signs of bondage, with this earth.

I yield to the reductions of a dissolute life, and
 ignore, like a ruthless dacoit, the thousand little
 acts of cruelty of this world and the society,

I spurn the slavery of affection, and I scorn modesty
 with sharp and strong lashing rebukes.

Premendra Mitra can claim some novelty in the creation of a new poetic vocabulary. His *Prathamā* (The first one, 1932), *Samrāt* (The emperor, 1940), *Ferāri Fouz* (The absconding army, 1948), *Sāgar Theke Pherā* (Return from the sea, 1956), *Harin Citā Cil* (Heron, Chita and Kite, 1960), etc. are quite admirable not so much on account of technique as for their message of humanism. Buddhadev could not come out from the confines of his narrow self, but Premendra Mitra merged his self in the world consciousness. Somewhat in the manner of Whitman and Spender he has stood by the side of the ordinary pedestrian and experienced God in the vast expanse of the world. His powerful vitality, the sun-steeped tropical sky, bone-white desert-bed only reveal the greater and nobler aspects of life. Premendra Mitra has saved modern Bengali poetry from the anaemia of self-centred insipid romance. It is also true that his fiery consciousness is mainly related to the externals. His conviction gives greater emphasis on the externals than on the essential problems



Buddhadev Basu
1908-1974

of life. It must also be admitted that his poetic technique is rather weak and not very original. Here are a few lines from one of his famous poems :

*hatabhāgāder bandarṭiteṭbhāi
sei sab yata bhāṅgā jāhājer bhīḍ—
śirdāḍā yār bēke gelo
ār daḍādaḍi gelo chīḍe
kabjā o kal begḍalo abaśeṣe,
jaulas gelo dhuye yār ār
patākāo paḍe nuye ;
phuto khole ār raite se nāre bhese,
—yāder noṅgar nāmābār ṭhāi
duniyār kinārāy
—yata hatabhāgā asamarther nirbāsiter nīḍ.*

In the port of these hopeless people
Crowd the broken ships
With dented frames and tattered cords
and machines gone out of order ;
With colours fading and flags flagging
holds leaking,
unable to float any longer.
The crowd of hopeless, incompetent exiles
anchor only at the brink of the world.

The dreams of Buddhadev Basu and Premendra Mitra were, however, differently realised by other poets. There is then no doubt about the independent status of modern Bengali poetry. The poetry of Jibanananda Das, Sudhindranath Datta, Bishnu De, Samar Sen and Amiya Chakrabarty cannot be said to be the imitation of Western poetry. In their hands modern Bengali poetry came of age. In their poems one can distinctly hear the individual voices. Jibanananda Das (1809-1954) is the most important poet of this period. He started his poetical career in imitation of Nazrul and Mohitlal (*Jharāpālak* of Jibanananda, for example), but in his subsequent poetical works, namely, *Dhūsar*

Pāṇḍulipi (The grey manuscript, 1936), *Banalatā Sen* (1942), *Mahāprithibī* (The great world, 1942), *Sātti Tārar Timir* (Darkness from seven stars, 1948), *Rūpasī Bāṅglā* (The beautiful Bengal, 1959) he found his real poetic self. Imagism, symbolism and surrealism blended with the unaccounted for melancholy, futile efforts to look for corridors of history, the chilled pain of the coming winter months have made the poetry of Jibanananda extremely sensuous and strangely romantic. Jibanananda has been tormented by despondent, cheerless agony on account of the futility of the twentieth century, death of desires and life fizzling out through the chinks of his fingers. It appears that the tyranny of modern existence and deep-seated dissatisfaction have been assimilated into romantic outlook of the poet. The limitations of reality bound by space and time have proved inimical to the soaring imagination of the poet. Therefore, he has voyaged into the hoary periods of history and has escaped the temporal and the spatial limitations. In the post-Tagore period Jibanananda is certainly the most significant poet both in terms of the poetic content and the poetic form. The novelty of syntactic structures which was once the most important target of attack of *Śanibārer Cithi*, (edited by Sajanikanta Das), is apparently incongruous and absurd play with words. But as the relation between the object and the symbol is not always manifest in surrealism, so in Jibanananda the image, form and content are not apparently very congruous. But once one gets used to his mind and temperament one can clearly see the relation between the stylistic device and the mind of the poet. It is Jibanananda who has successfully led modern Bengali poetry in a new direction. Here are a few lines from his remarkable poem.

*dekhechi sabuj pātā aghrāner andhakāre hayeche halud,
hijaler jānālay ālo ar bulbuli kariyāche khelā
īdur śīter rāte reśamer mato rome mākhīyāche khud,
cāler dhūsar gandhe tarāṅgerā rūp hoye jhoreche dū'belā
nirjan mācher cokhe ; pukurer pāre hās sandhyār ādhāre
peyeche ghumer ghrāṇ—meyeli hāter sparśa laye geche tāre.*



Jibanananda Das
1899-1954

I have seen the green leaves yellowing in the
 dark of *Aghran*, the play of light and bulbul
 by the hazel window,
 Rats covering their silken
 coats with huskings in chilly winter night.
 Enamoured of the smell of rice, the waves
 Transfigure in the eyes of the lonely fish ;
 The duck smells sleep in the darkness gathering
 on the bank of a tank in the evening
 When a soft female hand gently takes it home.

Sudhindranath Dutta (1901-1960) does not strike us as original in his first poetical work, *Tanvī* (1930). As an editor of the *Paricay* he was intimately acquainted with European poetry and gradually through his poetical works—*Orchestrā* (1935), *Krandasī* (1937), *Uttar Phālguni* (1940), *Sambarta* (1956) and *Daśamī* (1956)—he explored a new horizon for modern Bengali poetry. He is the obverse of Jibanananda, Rigid, classical, tightly structured words and use of unfamiliar words have made his poetry apparently obscure. But the obscurity of his poetry is confined only to the surface. If we care to delve deep into his poetry without being daunted by the sonorous words we will be astonished by the wealth of romantic love of nature and thirst for beauty stored in it. It is actually a special merit of his poetry to make an exercise of vocabulary, to dislocate the syntax into meaning, to use obscure, almost antiquated words and to use occasionally Sanskrit words in new meanings. The remarkable grammatical skill in using words and a sharp linguistic insight into the sonic content of words have given his poems a sculptural beauty. Although he was able to control his emotions and experience the world microscopically he felt a kind of romantic languor about life. In his last poem (published in the special number of *Betārjagat* in Autumn 1960) he could hear the footsteps of the enveloping darkness. The realization is uncanny; it is almost an extra-sensory perception. Although he longed for love and beauty in

life he writhed in pain within the limits of consciousness. Beyond his jugglery of words lies a melancholy romantic, visionary credo that wants to reconcile the life and the world but fails to comprehend its real nature on account of the discrepancy between the inner and the outer. Jibanananda and Sudhindranath are the two stalwarts of modern Bengali poetry. One has quietly watched the decadence standing in the midst of ruins ; the other has tried to raise a wall of thought and intellection to prevent the disintegration. They are thus complementary to each other, both, however, resuscitating modern Bengali poetry in diverse ways. The charge usually levelled against one (Jibanananda) is ideational obscurity ; the charge against the other (Sudhindranath) is deliberately created dictional obscurity. But if we read their poetry with an open mind we can really find them quite enjoyable. Except one or two poems of Jibanananda all his poems can be comprehended both sensuously and intellectually. The lexical obscurity of Sudhindranath is only a cloak. If we set it aside we will discover, beneath the hard exterior, a soft, loving poetic self marked by austere intellection and spontaneous emotion. Sudhindranath finally took shelter in the depth of his being. Here are a few lines from his poem :

*nibe gelo dīpāvali ; akasmāt asphut gunjan
stabdha halo prekṣāgṛhe. apanīta pracchader tale,
bādyasamabāy hote, ārambhila niḥsaṅga bāśari,
namra kaṇṭhe marami āhvān ; jāgila binmra sure
kampita uttar behālāy acirāt ; mor pāśe
samāsakta nāgar-nāgarī saṅge saṅge bikarṣila
chinnaguṇ dhanuker mato. gāḍha hāsyā pranayer
ekānta pralāp lajjā pelo sādharāṇye. ācambite
sacetan pratibēsinir piṅgal kuntal theke
nāmhīn ratiparimal paradeśi saṅgīter
mugdha samarthane mor citte sahasā jāgāye dilo
atīkrānta utsaber nirādhār sammoha ābār.*



Sudhindranath Datta
1901-1960

Lights went off ; murmurs suddenly subsided in the auditorium, suspense prevailed.

The curtain removed, a lonely flute from the orchestra

gave a touching call ; immediately came the modest response, falteringly, from a violin.

The spectators around at once became taut and tense like the string of a bent bow.

Luscious love scenes embarrassed the general audience.

Suddenly the fragrance of a nameless perfume used by my golden-haired neighbour and the spell

of the western music,

Awakened me to the strange feelings of romantic languor.

Both Bishnu De (1909-1981) and Samar Sen (1918) have transcended their narrow personal limitations and have written about the country, the society, the curse of city life and the humiliation of the middle class people. They have also realized the magnificent grandeur of the life to come. The poetic creed of Bishnu De can be ascertained from the *Urbaśi O Artemis* (1932), *Corābāli* (1938), *Pūrbalekha* (1940). *Sandiper Car* (1947), *Aṇviṣṭa* (1950), *Nām Rekechi Komal Gāndhār* (1950). The essential Samar Sen can be found in *Kayekti Kabitā* (1937), *Grahaṇ O Anyānya Kabitā* (1940), *Nānākathā* (1942) and *Tinpuruṣ* (1944). Bishnu De at the outset of his career had a realization of the Immanent Being ; but later, after the second World War he embraced Marxism. But towards the end of his life he retraced his steps to the world of romance. In fact he is a born romantic, but was misled into politics around the middle of his career. Luckily, he became disillusioned before it was too late. His poetry is also very obscure. But the obscurity is not only due to difficult lexical items or vagueness of thought ; it is mainly due to the fact that deep down in his psyche he experienced apparent dissimilarities. But this realization of the

reconciliation of the opposites is not properly transformed into art. This often results in incoherence in poetry. Moreover, it is difficult to keep pace with his fast and facile movement in historical and mythical antiquities. Recently, however, his style has considerably mellowed. Here are a few lines from one of his famous poems of the early phase.

*janasumudre nemeche joār,
hṛdaye āmār caḍā.
corābāli āmi dūr digante dāki—
kothāy ghodsoār ?
dipta biśvabijayī ! barsā tolo.
keno bhay ? keno bīrer bharasā bholo ?
nayane ghanāy bāre bāre oḥhāpaḍā.
chorābāli āmi dūr digante dāki,
hṛdaye āmār caḍā.*

The surging crowd is in high tide ;
My heart is a silted piece.
I, a quicksand, call the distant horizon ;
Where is the horseman ?
The proud conquerer of the world, raise your lance.
Why afraid ? Why forget the heroic assurance ?
I visualize the repeated rises and falls,
I, a quicksand, call the distant horizon
My heart turned into a silted piece.

Although the poet has expressed his longing to be carried away by the tide of the teeming multitude he has also intensely felt the beckonings of the old, mysterious, shadowy earth. The following few lines, for examples, created a strange atmosphere of mystery :

*calo yāi, he cuḍālā, baṅgopasāgare
mṛityuhīn sandiper care bhārat-sāgare calo
Māmallapurame konārka bandare*

kingba Cilkā sarobare kokonade rāmeśvare
tribānkure hastigumphā kāmbe kingbā
baṅgopaśāgare
jābhāte valite mārtabāne odesāy astrākhāne
batum bā balkhāse arale bā kārākole keu
ek-i ek-i sab bāṅglār bhārater gāye gāye śahare
śahare
callis koṭir prāṇ dole.

Let us go then, O Chuḍālā, you and I,
 to the Bay of Bengal,
 to the deathless island of Sandip of the Indian ocean
 to Mamallapuram, to the port of Konark, or, to
 the lake of Chilka, Kokanada, or, Rameswar,
 Trivancore, the Elephanta caves or the Bay of Bengal.
 In Java, Bali, Martaban, Oddessa, Astrakhan,
 Batum, Balkhas, Arale and Karakol—wherever one
 lives it is the same spirit that finds and enthrals all
 the Indians.

Although the poet has expressed his desire to live in the midst of the people he has not been able to dissociate romance from his poetic self.

Samar Sen, from the very beginning of his poetic career has expressed the meaninglessness of the urban middle class life and the ugly, squalor of modern existence in simple, prosaic language. He wants the welfare of man, and therefore, he is quite fond of the life of the common man. He is very much against the colourless middle class life and the popular, insincere slogans of political leaders. His tone is harsh corresponding to the harshness of existence which he wants to protest against. By parodying some of the famous romantic lines of Rabindranath in hard and gritty language he has created a new kind of poetic beauty. For example:

mlān hoye elo rumāle
ivning-in-pyāriser gandha—
he śahar, he dhūsar śahar !
kālighāt brijer upare kakhano ki śunte pāo
lampaṭer padadhvani,
kāler yātrār dhvani śunte ki pāo
he śahar, he dhūsar śahar ;
lubdha loker bhīḍe yakhan tumi nāco
daś tākāy kenā kayek praharer he urbasī,
takhan śāḍir ār tāḍir ullāse
amṛter putrer buke citta ātmahārā
nāce raktadhārā
ār digante jvalanta chāḍ oṭhe
he śahar, he dhūsar śahar.

The scent of Evening-in-Paris fades in my hanky
 O City, O grey City !
 Do you ever hear the footsteps of a libertine
 on the bridge of Kalighat ?
 Do you hear the footsteps of Time
 O City, O grey City !
 When you dance, O Urbasi, cheaply hired
 for a few hours' pleasure,
 before the ogling gaze of a lustful crowd
 then with the inebriation of wine and woman
 the child of God feels in his veins
 a dance of blood in complete abandonment.
 And the burning moon pops up in the distant horizon.
 O City, O grey City !

Amiya Chakrabarty is noted for his *Khaṣḍā* (1938), *Ekmuṭho* (1939) *Mātir Dewāl* (1942) and *Parāpār*. In these poetical works we find simultaneously an eloquent protest against modern existence and a desire for fullness of life to be achieved through love, beauty, sacrifice and dedication. The last poem of *Parāpār* may be regarded as his poetic manifesto :

*epāre opāre bandhu, hayto opāre,
 sab mile ek hoye mohānāy dui nadī mele,
 he mahāsumdra, tumi sab dheuye ek dheu dole
 abirām jībaner tr̥pti dāo anih̥ṣeṣ prem.
 ānander taraṅger duḥkhaghāt taṭe taṭe lāge
 buke buke saṁsārer ei chōyā, ei dūre kādā,
 milaner prānte dhākā, niler kāntār, tumi eso,
 miṣe yāoyā sarba tumi, akampita ākampita tumi.
 eso jībaner sei dhulor pratyer dekhā ābhā,
 yār dipti esechilo cokhe cokhe bakṣe bakṣa ghire.*

On this side, on that side, perhaps on that side
 my friend,

The rivers unite at the estuary.

O great ocean, all thy small waves are only part
 of a great one.

Grant me the bliss of unending love in a ceaseless life.

Waves of joy and sorrows break on this shores ;

Warm human emotions and pangs of separation

bordering on the pleasures of union, and the blue of
 the ocean are all reconciled in you—

the unwavering pulsation.

I welcome the lurid glow of dusty life

realized in the lustre of human eyes.

Sanjay Bhattacharya, Subhas Mukhopadhyay and Sukanta Bhattacharya come with strong vitality. Although the poetry of Subhas Mukhopadhyay is dominated by political propaganda, his artistic technique is quite interesting. Recently, he has discovered the secret of life through his explorations of the genesis of a poem. Sukanta possessed a fine poetic sensibility. As he was drawn into the vortex of political propaganda in his early youth, he could not realise his poetic potentialities. Now-a-days, the journals and periodicals almost bristle with innumerable poets. They are all experimentalists and all their energy is expended in devising evernew techniques. It is difficult to

differentiate the good ones from the bad ones in a crowd of poets. The innumerable poems that appear in print these days only prove that poetry has not died with Rabindranath.

Modern Bengali poetry which began with experimentations in all directions is now passing through a dull phase. Jiban-ananda and Sudhindranath are no more; Bishnu De and Amiya Chakrabarty also passed away. Buddhadeb was more or less enthusiastic and Premendra is inert. Of course, there is no dearth of poets. Thousands of poems are being composed, printed and read. But there is little sign of remarkable poetic talent. One word more. During the period from 1930 to 1970 innumerable modern poems have been composed. These, unfortunately had their appeal only to a handful of English educated men. These did not perhaps reach out to the general people. Naturally, when one writes Bengali poems in imitation of English and French poems, throwing the Indian tradition to the winds, it is only natural that such poetry cannot have a national character. A literature that cannot involve all the sections of the people, is like the drawing-room orchid destined to natural death. It is time we make an assessment of modern Bengali poetry in terms of tradition and experiment since Bengali poetry has by now developed a tradition of its own. It is heartening to note that the Bengali poets of the last two decades (Haraprasad Mitra, Nirendra Chakrabarty, Birendra Chattopadhyay, Dines Das, Nares Guha, Arun Bhattacharya, Manindra Ray, Suddhasattya Basu, Arun Mitra, Jagannath Chakrabarty, Rajlakshmi Devi, Kavita Sinha, Ketaki Kusari Dayson, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Shakti Chattopadhyay, Sankha Ghosh, Alokranjan Dasgupta *et al*) have produced some of the finest poems which are accepted as a symbol and pointer to modern mind in the All-India forum of poets and lovers of poetry.

Drama and Dramatic Performance

Although the quality of drama has gone down in the post-war period, in terms of variety of subject, acting skill and modern

dramaturgy, theatre is still entertaining the audience. The professional stage, however, continues to be busy with old plays, modern plays with old subjects, dramatized versions of novels and emotional treatment of social problems. Various dramaturgical techniques, technical aids, lighting and realistic setting are introduced in imitation of the Western theatre. But dramatic literature has not developed much. It is sometimes said that drama has suffered adversely on account of the popularity of cinema. But in the other parts of the world one can see that development in cinema has not at all affected the theatre. On the contrary, in the West, theatre and acting have considerably improved. The western dramatic literature of modern times is also very rich. In our country the amateurish drama directors and the greedy authorities only try to cover up their inabilities putting the blame squarely on the cinema. Instead of producing good plays and encouraging talented dramatists they are interested only in the success of the box-office. Their sole interest is to earn money by entertaining the audience with gimmicks. Illusive lighting, realistic setting and show of railway station, train, mine, factory, ship, and studio with the help of modern technical aids are done at the cost of the real drama. Even after a play has been staged for a thousand nights, it is forgotten in no time because it is eventually a writer's drama. Mechanical jugglery cannot satisfy the people for a long time. 'Girish Natya Parisad', 'Bahurupi', 'Little Theatre Group', 'Rupakar', 'Bharatiya Gananatya Sangha', 'Bangiya Shakespeare Parisad', 'Shaubhanik', 'Nandikar', 'Theatre Centre' and some other progressive and aristocratic theatre troupes are trying to save the drama and the acting from the clutches of the professional stage. But they are also not very successful in bringing out original plays. Some of them, covertly or overtly, are following the same professional path of course for maintaining their subsistence.

The ravages of history that Bengal has undergone after the Second World War are unparalleled by other states of India. Many contemporary dramatists have used the problem of social life arising out of this historical crisis for their dramatic material.

Bijan Bhattacharya (*Nabānna*), Digin Bandyopadhyay (*Antarāl*, *Taraṅga*, *Bāstubhitā*, *Mokābilā*), Tulsi Lahiri (*Chēḍā Tār*, *Ulu Khagḍā*, *Pathik* etc.) and Salil Sen (*Natun Ihudī*) have expressed dramatically the class-struggle of the present day society, communal conflict and moral degradation leading to the collapse of all values. Dhananjay Vairagi in his recent plays has tried to depict the scarred life of the modern man. The plays of Dhirendranath Gangopadhyay also used the background of the society, realistic portrait and psychological conflict and alienation of modern man but also suggests the possibility of ultimate redemption. In this context we should remember one thing. Although the above-mentioned dramatists have realistically depicted the malaise of modern times, there is not a single drama which can be said to be a national drama. The dramatists are so much preoccupied with the short-lived realistic problems that they lose sight of the fact that drama is, after all, an art-form. They pounce upon the problem that becomes dominant in the society and present it dramatically on the stage. Some of these dramas succeed, for some time on account of excellent acting and skilful stage-craft, and then pass into oblivion. Galsworthy wrote plays about various social problems of England. But the problem apart, his dramas have a universal appeal. In spite of their contemporaneity they are timeless. Such a universal appeal is unfortunately absent in our contemporary Bengali play. The quality of dramatic literature is going down as the technical aids to theatre is increasing. Moreover, many contemporary plays are tailored to suit the Calcutta stage. Outside Calcutta they cannot be suitably staged. They are then either drastically revised almost beyond recognition or rejected outright. In the countryside *Janā*, *Karṇārjun*, *Prafulla*, *Sājāhān*, *Candragupta*, *Misarkumārī*, *Ālibābā* etc. are still staged with gusto, but the contemporary plays are not really welcome. In addition to the obscurity of the subject of the contemporary plays, the stage directions have also become so increasingly complicated and mechanical that it is well-nigh impossible to produce these plays in rural areas. Unless acting becomes simple, light, and easy to under-

stand, the plays cannot involve the entire nation. More recently a number of dramatists (Utpal Datta, Badal Sarkar, Ramen Lahiri, Susil Mukhopadhyay, Sailes Guhaniyogi, Ratan Ghosh, Manoj Mitra *et al*), are trying to depict the riddle of existence either through a presentation of the social chaos or, slogan-dominated political events or psychic symbols. It is too early to make any assessment of these ventures. But one thing is quite certain that in spite of good translation of Western dramas (as for example, dramas of Bertolt Brecht, Samuel Beckett, John Osborne) modern Bengali stage has not yet been able to build up histrionic art as one of the most powerful media for national regeneration of dramatic literature and stage like the Irish Literature Theatre (1899) and the Abbey Theatre (1910).

In this connection we are to note with concern that the growing menace of most of the popular *Yātrās* is vitiating the common man's aesthetic sense by exposing him to sensational, erotic and puerile gimmicks of professional stage only for clap-trap and pecuniary gains. As bad money drives out good money, the present-day *Yātrā* performance, very popular in towns and villages, would hamper the proper development of Bengali theatre and dramatic literature.

Modern Fiction

Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, Manik Bandyopadhyay, Manoj Basu, Narayan Gangopadhyay and Narendranath Mitra opened up new horizons of Bengali novels. There are certain other interesting new developments not registered in their novels. The *Paricay*, a quarterly, was initially circulated only amongst a handful of intellectual readers. As it passed through serious economic crisis it was recast as a monthly in a new series. It still retains its cultural aristocracy. But when ultimately this famous journal came to be controlled by persons belonging to one particular political ideology, the journal changed its character. Of the people who strengthened the 'Paricaya' group by incorporating a heavy dose of Marxism, Gopal Halder deserves special

mention. He has tried to discover the secret of life and culture in the light of historical evolution and dilectical materialism (*Samskṛtir Rūpāntar, Bāṅgālī Samskṛtir Rūp*). His philosophical and cultural views are outside the scope of our present discussion. But one must admire his bold outlook and courage of conviction evidenced in his novel, *Ekadā* (1939). We must however, hasten to add that most of his novels, being essentially propaganda novels, lose their brightness after having a brief spell of raging popularity. Most of the writers belonging to 'Paricay' group are very powerful. They are trying to skilfully delineate the life of the poor and middle class Bengalis and various problems connected with class-struggle. But one does not know how long these novels will survive, because just the seriousness of the problem discussed cannot necessarily ensure the longevity of literature.

In this connection it is necessary to mention the name of Subodh Ghosh. In his novels and short stories he has been able to depict life in a distinctive style which makes him stand apart from both the old and the new novelists. His short stories are, perhaps, better than his novels as art.

As we have now-a-days a number of novels describing the chaotic modern life, we have, at the same time quite a few novels of epic dimensions dealing with ancient and fairly recent history. Bimal Mitra's *Sāheb Bibi Golām*, *Kaḍi Diye Kinlām*, *Ekak Daśak Śatak*, *Begam Merī Bīśvās*, Ramapada Chowdhury's *Lāl Bāī*, Amiya Bhusan Mazumder's *Nil Bhūiyā*, *Rājnagar*, Pramathanath Bisi's *Keri Sāheber Munsi*, *Lāl Kellā*, Saktipada Rajguru's *Mani Begam*, Narayan Gangopadhyay's *Padasanchār*, *Amābaśyār Gān*, Pratapchandra Chanda's *Job Cārnaker Bibi* have broken new grounds. The pictures of the problems of daily life depicted in the backdrop of history have given these novels a kind of dimension which could not have been possible in simple realistic fiction. Of these novels, Pramathanath Bisi's *Keri Sāheber Munsi*, *Lāl Kellā*, Bimal Mitra's *Sāheb Bibi Golām* and *Kaḍi Diye Kinlām* and Narayan Gangopadhyay's *Padasanchār* (in two volumes) have been very popular.

In this connection we should also take note of another kind of novel. The frontier of Bengali novel has considerably extended. Not only the drawing-room romance of Manindralal and Buddhadev, or the imaginary description of the realistic life of Calcutta found in Yubanasva's *Paṭaldāṅgār Pācālī*, but also realistic description of the vast society lying outside Calcutta, have enriched Bengali novel. Prafulla Ray's *Pūrba Pārbaṭī*, *Sindhupārer Pākhi*, Manoj Basu's *Jal Jaṅgal*, *Sei Sab Mānuṣ Sei Sab Grām*, Samaresh Basu's *Gaṅgā*, Advaita Mallabarmān's *Titās Ekti Nadir Nām* have skilfully used the regions known or unknown, to make significant contribution to the development of modern Bengali novel. In their treatment of a landscape and seascape and the local colour they have given a touch of realism to the romantic outlook of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. A few young novelists, again, have penetrated deep into the human psychology and have used psychological complexes and mental aberrations in their novels. Jyotirindra Nandi, Bimal Kar and Santosh Ghosh have applied Freudian and post-Freudian psychology in their analysis of fictive characters. Some fashionable critics condemn their audacious ventures. These novelists have abandoned the expanse of life and have explored the indecent, prohibited areas of life. It is too early to decide how far their efforts will stand the test of time. But it must be admitted that their short stories are more successful than their novels.

Of late, one gentleman has suddenly become very popular for his writings under the pseudonym of 'Abadhut'. *Marutīrtha Himlāj* and *Uddhāraṇpurur Ghāṭ* have made this writer famous overnight. His stories and novels are full of ugly, obscene descriptions of juicy topics. Though a section of readers was initially attracted by his clandestine writings they soon got over the pernicious spell. Abadhut is a man of chequered career and varied experience. Some of his experiences which are essentially distasteful and obnoxious strongly fascinate, like a forbidden object, the innocent and the uninitiated. But the intoxication does not last long and then one rejects him. His attitude to life is sceptic and atheistic, partly stoical, and, then,

there is his dirty life with esoteric experience. After a temporary success he is now dwindling into insignificance. Recently, three novels of Samaresh Basu (*Bibar*, *Prajāpati* and *Pātak*) have raised a storm of controversy in Bengali literature. It is alleged that the writer has unduly ignored art and has indulged in unnecessary obscenity. In other words, his novels have degenerated into pornography. Time is not yet ripe for sitting in judgement over such allegation. But there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that Samaresh Basu is a very powerful writer. A few young novelists and short story writers like Sunil Gangopadhyay, Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Sankar, Atindra Bandyopadhyay, Samaresh Majumdar *et al* have already proved their mettle in their works. Some of the successful women novelists—Ashapurna Devi, Mahasveta Devi, Pratibha Basu, Kavita Sinha, are also to be noted for their refreshing writings. They are ably vieing with their male comrades.

The same kind of variety is evident also in the contemporary short stories. The writers are variedly concerned with the problems and prospects of the underdogs as well as the inscrutable mysteries of human existence. Experimentations are going on regarding the length, plot, characterization, dramatic element and lyrical qualities of a short story. But gradually, the short story is becoming increasingly symbolic and surrealistic; so much so that the relation between the mind and the matter, the inner psyche and the external world is becoming thinner and thinner. Modern short story-writers feel that the story element should not dominate in a short story. Jyotirindra Nandi, Bimal Kar, and Santosh Ghosh have tried to demonstrate it through their newly evolved techniques. Today the Bengali short story is closely connected with the movement of short stories round the world. In other words, modern Bengali short stories have an international recognition and standard. A few young writers are trying to bring about a pleasant surprise in the fields of novels and short stories, with the help of symbolic suggestion. Of them, Kamal Mazumder may be specially mentioned for his archaic and bizarre style. Sandipan Chattopadhyay, Yasodajiban Bhatta-

chrya, Manabendra Paul, Sushil Ray, Mati Nandi deserve commendation. They have been influenced by the experiments that are going on in the Post-War Europe regarding form, technique and content of fiction. Their novels are marked by inscrutability of life, symbolic subtleties, pessimism, strong attachment to forbidden carnal passions and helpless surrender to hollowness and void. How far they are successful as artist, and how far the general reading public of Bengal will accept them is a matter of surmise. However, Bengali short story has surpassed all other regional short stories of India in quality and variety. Even an ordinary writer sometimes works wonder with his stories. There is no doubt that the future of Bengali short story is very bright, as it is comparable even now with the best short stories of any literature of the world.

Essays in Modern Bengali Literature

The abundance of essays and intellectual articles in modern Bengali literature cannot escape anybody's notice. The essay literature has been considerably enriched by scholarship, research and latest theories of literature, art, history and philosophy. Many scholars are recording their original findings of sustained research, in Bengali language. *Bāṅgālir Itihās* (the early period) by Niharranjan Ray, *Śrī Rādhār Kramabikāś* and *Bhārater Śaktisādhana O Śākta Sāhitya* by Sashibhushan Dasgupta, *Baṅgasāhitye Upanāsyer Dhārā* by Srikumar Bandyopadhyay, *Pascimbaṅger Saṁskṛti* by Binay Ghose, *Bāṅgālā Sāhityer Itihās* by Sukumar Sen, *Bāṅglā Maṅgal Kāvyer Itihās*, and *Bāṅglār Loksāhitya* by Asutosh Bhattacharya, *Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇava Darśaner Itihās* by Radhagovinda Nath, *Lokāyata Darśan* by Debiprasad Chattopadhyay, *Bāṅglār Bāul O Bāul Gan* by Upendranath Bhattacharya are precious additions to Bengali literature, although some of these books were published before the Second World War. Many scholars have recently contributed their doctoral dissertations to Bengali literature. But the dissertations are gradually

becoming so voluminous and pedantic that research in literature is becoming an increasingly dreary matter. Some writers have examined the society and culture from the view point of a journalist. *Pascimbaṅger Saṁskṛti* by Binay Ghosh is an instance. In spite of hard labour and masterly marshalling of facts this huge book is more a piece of journalism than literature. Some of the modern critics have tried to place Bengali literary criticism at par with the literary criticism prevalent in the west. Buddhadev Basu, Sudhindranath Datta and Bishnu De carried on lifelong struggle to achieve this objective. Their literary criticism is more aesthetic and analytical than academic. Recently, Sibnarayan Ray is up against all the old values. He is bent upon completely shattering the traditional values by propagating radically progressive views and absolute intellectuality. Personal dogmatism and positive disrespect for the Indian tradition have been inimical to the realisation of his objectives despite his sharp intellect and profound knowledge of European culture. We have also a bulk of writings concerned with science, history and philosophy, written in light vein, and also some text books, but their quality is generally very poor. In this connection we may mention the name of Nirod Chowdhury. Until recently this free lance intellectual writer who has accepted Oxford as his second homeland, used to write only in English. In old age he has started writing in Bengali. His style is lucid and sharp and his contentions are highly controversial. Literary writings of Abu Saiyad Ayub are full of intellectual brilliance and deep penetrative profundity.

Before we conclude this chapter we should like to make some observations on a new kind of prose writing generally known as "Ramya Racanā" (delightful writing or *belles lettres*). This species, a kind of light personal essay, has now become very popular. Personal essays attained a type of perfection in Buddhadev Basu's *Haṭāt Ālor Jhalkāni* (Spray of sudden light, 1935). But in the Post-War period Bengali personal essay has taken a peculiar turn. Many weak writers incapable of any serious thought have started pouring out all kinds of rubbish in the name

of personal essay. They claimed to have taken the eighteenth century essayists (Steele, Addison and Goldsmith) and Charles Lamb of the nineteenth century as their models. Yayabar, Ranjan, Saiyad Mujtaba Ali, Parimal Ray, Bimalaprasad Mukhopadhyay, Rupadarsi have become popular for their fine personal essays, travelogues and light conversational style of writing. Some writers have written excellent books on the basis of their personal, professional experience. Sankar (*Kato Ajānāre, Cowraṅgee*) Jarasandha (*Louhakapāṭ, Tāmasī*), Anandakishore Munsi (*Dāktārer Diary*), Sukanya (*Khadir Likhan*), Dhiraj Bhattacharyay (*Yakhan Pulis Chilām, Yakhan Nāyak Chilām*) have transmuted their professional and occupational experiences into fine art-form. Of this, again, Jarasandha and Dhiraj Bhattacharya sound artificial in their efforts to impress the reader. Of all the books of this kind Sankar's *Kato Ajānāre* and Sukanya's *Khadir Likhan* deserve special mention. In the hands of these writers, the dull, lifeless, legal documents and cheerless life of a school teacher are touched up by the warmth of human emotions.

Writing personal essay is a very difficult job ; it is more difficult than writing a lyric. Without a broad, catholic and profound outlook a personal essay becomes too narrowly personal. Sometimes the matter is unusually toned down ; thought becomes loose and diluted. The reader also becomes so much used to the light mood that he cannot concentrate on the serious subject when it is introduced. Recently, proliferation of 'Ramya Racanā' has resulted in a general intellectual laxity and weakness. 'Ramya Racanā' and whimsical personal essays have brought about a crisis in Bengali intellectual literature.

Any discussion of the contemporary literature will make it abundantly clear that the age of individual talents like Bankimchandra and Rabindranath, is over. In the age of democracy literature also witnesses decline of dictatorship. In place of one Bankimchandra or one Rabindranath we have a large number of mediocre writers in our democratic age. Until recently, the

huge tall tree like Tagore gave shelter to a number of intellectual birds. Now that tree is uprooted. The innumerable birds are now chirping perched on shrubs and bushes. In place of one towering personality, a gigantic literary talent we have the bustling, jostling crowd of innumerable mediocre talents thronging in the temple of literature. How far these mediocrities can fill the void created by the deaths of Bankimchandra and Rabindranath will be determined by posterity. Time is the ultimate judge.
